



**TESTIMONY OF PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

September 30, 2009

Position: Qualified Opposition

As the world's largest pet trade association, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) appreciates the opportunity to offer this esteemed committee our views on House Bill 124. Representing the interests of all segments of the pet industry throughout the United States, PIJAC counts among its thousands of members various associations, organizations, corporations and individuals involved in the commercial pet trade. More specifically, we represent pet breeders, pet product manufacturers, distributors and retailers throughout Ohio who would be significantly impacted by the legislation before you today.

Let me emphasize that nobody cares more about humane breeding and rearing standards than does PIJAC. We have, for many years, provided a highly respected animal care certification program intended to ensure that employees are well trained in the care of the animals they sell; a program that is widely utilized not only by persons in the commercial pet trade but also shelters and humane societies throughout the country, and one that has even been adopted as a statutory standard. PIJAC has worked closely with the USDA on effective implementation of the Animal Welfare Act for pets since its inception over three decades ago, and has joined hands with state and local agencies to ensure adoption and enforcement of appropriate regulatory standards. Similarly, PIJAC has worked with a number of states that have designed kennel and/or pet store licensure programs. Our association has long been recognized as the voice for a responsible pet trade, and routinely advocates for new statutory standards that are in the best interests of companion animals and the pet-owning public. We also continually seek to advance the voluntary implementation of superior standards in the care, handling and transport of companion animals.

Thus we emphasize again that we support appropriate humane care standards. But we caution against adoption of a dual licensure system that subjects licensees to conflicting legal standards.

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As the committee is aware, commercial breeders of dogs and cats for the pet industry are already subject to licensing and inspection pursuant to the Federal Animal Welfare Act. Regulations promulgated under that act provide extensive standards for the breeding, housing, transport and general care of pet animals.

We believe that care should be taken when considering establishment of a dual licensing system for commercial breeders. Only a minority of states has taken this route at all and, when doing so, such states endeavor to fashion a system that will not create conflicting standards between the federal and state licensing schemes. We suggest that the committee should consider whether there is a sufficient basis for directing scarce resources to the state regulation of breeders that are already licensed under federal law.

Notwithstanding the hysteria and hyperbole disseminated by some, professionalism in the pet trade has steadily and consistently increased over the past several years, and the quality of care provided pet animals has improved and continues to do so. Most in the commercial dog trade do a good job. PIJAC is proud of its part in making this happen. At the same time, there is always room for continued improvement, and we recognize there are still those who fail to meet acceptable standards. PIJAC routinely works with legislators and regulators to close this gap, and we would be pleased to provide whatever assistance we might to this committee in furthering that objective.

In the current economic climate, when many in the pet trade are struggling to keep their businesses alive, we urge the committee to carefully evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of imposing additional regulatory burdens on a sector of the market that is already heavily regulated at the federal level. **If the committee determines that imposition of a second licensing scheme is necessary, we respectfully request that Senate Bill 460 be amended by inserting at the end of new Subsection 19A-24(a)(1a) the following language:**

“Such standards shall be consistent in all regards with standards established under the federal Animal Welfare Act and regulations promulgated thereunder.”

Also, the proposed surety bond requirements may pose a problem for some breeding kennels. An already struggling business may have problems coming up with such high bonds. We suggest revisiting the insurance requirements. Furthermore, with legislation such as this, seeking to impose new requirements on pet businesses, PIJAC highly recommends the creation of a Task Force, as other states have established, consisting of shareholders and government representatives so that both sectors can work together to develop appropriate standards.

Thank you greatly for your consideration of our concerns!

Respectfully submitted
Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
By: Michael Maddox, Esq.